



Fans sit under a TikTok ad at a baseball game at Yankee Stadium, April 14, 2023, in New York.

Associated Press

Americans divided on TikTok ban even as Biden campaign joins the app, AP-NORC poll shows

By **HALELUYA HADERO**
Associated Press

President Joe Biden's campaign is embracing TikTok to court younger voters ahead of the presidential elections, but U.S. adults

have mixed views about whether the video-sharing app should even operate in the country.

A new poll by The Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

finds a three-way split when it comes to banning the app, with 31% of U.S. adults saying they would favor a nationwide ban on TikTok use, while 35% say they would oppose that type of

action. An additional 31% of adults say they neither favor nor oppose a ban on the social media platform, which is owned by Beijing-based ByteDance. Among those who use TikTok at

least daily, a national ban would likely be highly unpopular: 73% say they oppose it.

Continued on next page

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK PROFESSIONAL COMPLIMENTARY PICTURES ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

SUNDAY: MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	MONDAY: ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	TUESDAY: JEAN PAUL SAXOPHONIST 6:30 - 8:30pm	WEDNESDAY: EDDIE KROON SINGER 4:00 - 6:00pm MAILLEYN ALVARADO VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm KARAOKE 9:00 - 11:00pm	THURSDAY: MARRYBELL MADURO SINGER 6:30 - 8:30pm	FRIDAY: RICKY THOMAS GUITARIST 7:00 - 9:00pm	SATURDAY: EDDIE KROON SINGER 4:00 - 6:00pm ANGELA FLORES VIOLINIST 6:30 - 8:30pm
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TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington, Jan. 31, 2024.

Associated Press

Continued from Front

Talks of a TikTok ban reached a fever pitch in the U.S. early last year after a series of Western lawmakers, governments and regulators raised concerns that a set of Chinese laws could force the company to share user data with the country's authoritarian government. Specific evidence of such an incident hasn't been provided by the U.S. government or TikTok critics, who also posit the platform could be used to spread propaganda beneficial to the Chinese government's interests or be used to bury or amplify certain topics.

TikTok has vigorously defended itself, saying in part that it has never shared data with the Chinese government and won't do so if asked. The company also has promised to wall off U.S. user data from its parent company through a separate entity run independently from ByteDance

and monitored by outside observers. TikTok says new user data is currently being stored on servers maintained by the software company Oracle.

The White House is expected to announce later this month new efforts it will take aimed at protecting Americans' sensitive personal data from foreign adversaries, including China, according to a person familiar with the administration's planning. The person spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the plan that has yet to be formally announced by the White House.

The Biden administration also reaffirmed this week there is an ongoing review of the platform by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S., which last year reportedly threatened to widely ban the app if its Chinese owners don't divest their stakes.

Meanwhile, congressional efforts to enact a broader

ban — including bipartisan legislation that doesn't mention TikTok by name but would give the Commerce Department the power to review and potentially restrict its use — was stalled last year amid opposition from industry and digital rights groups, as well as some lawmakers, influencers and small businesses who use the platform.

The AP-NORC poll shows TikTok users — about 170 million in the U.S., most of whom skew younger — are less likely to be worried about the app sharing American users' data, reflecting a previously felt generational divide. About a quarter of daily users say they are "extremely or very concerned" about the idea of the Chinese government obtaining the personal information of users, compared to about half of U.S. adults overall.

"For politicians, it's like a hot potato," said Dan Ives, a tech analyst at the finan-

cial advisory firm Wedbush Securities. "Because in one way (they) want to sound tough in front of the microphone. But then the reality is, it could backfire."

A majority of U.S. adults, 56%, said they would favor a more limited TikTok ban on government devices, such as government employees' computers and phones. Such bans have been implemented by at least 36 states, the federal government and some other countries, as well as the European Union. About a quarter of U.S. adults are neutral on blocking TikTok from government devices, while 17% are opposed.

The Biden campaign has said it is using a separate cellphone for TikTok to isolate the app from other communications and was taking additional steps for protection. Some Republicans have criticized the decision. Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Mark Warner, a Virginia Demo-

crat, also told reporters on Monday that he remained concerned about the social media platform.

"We still need to find a way to follow India, which has prohibited TikTok," Warner said. "I'm a little worried about a mixed message."

In response to a question about whether the campaign's use of the app neutralizes security concerns that have been raised, TikTok spokesperson Alex Haurek said, "We're hopeful policymakers — of both parties — recognize the progress we've made in securing protected U.S. user data, an effort that has put us well ahead of any peer company in this space."

Last year, former Republican presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy joined the app in an effort to reach younger voters, despite calling it "digital fentanyl" that must be banned. Other Republican candidates found other methods to get their messages on the platform, such as producing video clips that could be shared between apps or working with conservative influencers already present on the app.

The poll also found that about 6 in 10 U.S. adults — and 41% of daily TikTok users — are "extremely or very concerned" about the amount of time children and teenagers spend on TikTok. A majority of adults, 59%, say they are concerned about the spread of misinformation on the app, while about half are worried about people doing dangerous or illegal things they see others doing on the platform, something that is felt less among TikTok users.

TikTok said last year it was implementing time limits for minors. But those restrictions still allow teens to keep watching content after they enter a passcode. The company says it's also bolstering its work to counter misinformation by partnering with more global fact-checking organizations, among other initiatives. This week, TikTok said it would set up fact-checking hubs inside the app to help counter false information in the upcoming European Union elections. □

Donald Trump fraud verdict: \$364 million penalty in New York civil case

By **MICHAEL R. SISAK, JAKE OFFENHARTZ and JENNIFER PELTZ**

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York judge ruled Friday against Donald Trump, imposing a \$364 million penalty over what the judge ruled was a yearslong scheme to dupe banks and others with financial statements that inflated the former president's wealth. Trump also was barred from serving as an officer or director of any New York corporation for three years. However, the judge backed away from an earlier ruling that would have dissolved the former president's companies.

Trump lawyer Alina Habba called the verdict "manifest injustice" and "the culmination of a multi-year, politically fueled witch hunt."

Judge Arthur Engoron issued his decision after a 2½-month trial that saw the Republican presidential front-runner bristling under oath that he was the victim of a rigged legal system. Engoron concluded that Trump and his co-defendants "failed to accept responsibility" for their actions and that expert witnesses who testified for the defense "simply denied reality."

The judge called the civil fraud at the heart of the trial a "venial sin, not a mortal sin." But Engoron said the refusal by Trump and his associates to admit wrongdoing suggested they would continue if not constrained. "Their complete lack of contrition and remorse borders on pathological," added Engoron, a Democrat. The stiff penalty was a victory for New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Democrat, who sued Trump over what she said was not just harmless bragging but years of deceptive practices as he built the multinational collection of skyscrapers, golf courses and other properties that catapulted him to wealth, fame and the White House. Trump's lawyers had said



Former President Donald Trump attends the closing arguments in the Trump Organization civil fraud trial at New York State Supreme Court in the Manhattan borough of New York, Jan. 11, 2024.

even before the verdict that they would appeal.

James sued Trump in 2022 under a state law that authorizes her to investigate persistent fraud in business dealings.

The suit accused Trump and his co-defendants of routinely puffing up his financial statements to create an illusion his properties were more valuable than they really were. State lawyers said Trump exaggerated his wealth by as much as \$3.6 billion one year.

By making himself seem richer, Trump qualified for better loan terms, saved on interest and was able to complete projects he might otherwise not have finished, state lawyers said. Even before the trial began, Engoron ruled that James had proven Trump's financial statements were fraudulent. The judge ordered some of Trump's companies removed from his control and dissolved. An appeals court put that decision on hold.

In that earlier ruling, the judge found that, among other tricks, Trump's financial statements had wrongly claimed his Trump Tower penthouse was nearly three times its actual size and overvalued his Mar-a-

Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, based on the idea that the property could be developed for residential use, even though he had surrendered rights to develop it for any uses but a club. Trump, one of 40 witnesses to testify at the trial, said his financial statements actually understated his net worth and that banks did their own research and were happy with his business.

"There was no victim. There was no anything," Trump testified in November. During the trial, Trump called the judge "extremely hostile" and the attorney general "a political hack." In a six-minute diatribe during closing arguments in January, Trump proclaimed "I am an innocent man" and called the case a "fraud on me."

Trump and his lawyers have said the outside accountants that helped prepare the statements should've flagged any discrepancies and that the documents came with disclaimers that shielded him from liability. They also argued that some of the allegations were barred by the statute of limitations.

The suit is one of many legal headaches for Trump as he

campaigns for a return to the White House. He has been indicted four times in the last year accused in Georgia and Washington, D.C., of plotting to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden, in Florida of hoarding classified documents, and in Manhattan of falsifying business records related to hush money paid to porn actor Stormy Daniels on his behalf.

On Thursday, a judge confirmed Trump's hush-money trial will start on March 25 and a judge in Atlanta heard arguments on whether to remove Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis from his Georgia election interference case because she had a personal relationship with a special prosecutor she hired. Those criminal accusations haven't appeared to undermine his march toward the Republican presidential nomination, but civil litigation has threatened him financially.

On Jan. 26, a jury ordered Trump to pay \$83.3 million to writer E. Jean Carroll for defaming her after she accused him in 2019 of sexually assaulting her in a Manhattan department store in the 1990s. That's on top of

the \$5 million a jury awarded Carroll in a related trial last year.

In 2022, the Trump Organization was convicted of tax fraud and fined \$1.6 million in an unrelated criminal case for helping executives dodge taxes on extravagant perks such as Manhattan apartments and luxury cars.

James had asked the judge to impose a penalty of at least \$370 million.

Engoron decided the case because neither side sought a jury and state law doesn't allow for juries for this type of lawsuit.

Because it was civil, not criminal in nature, the case did not carry the potential of prison time.

James, who campaigned for office as a Trump critic and watchdog, started scrutinizing his business practices in March 2019 after his former personal lawyer Michael Cohen testified to Congress that Trump exaggerated his wealth on financial statements provided to Deutsche Bank while trying to obtain financing to buy the NFL's Buffalo Bills. James' office previously sued Trump for misusing his own charitable foundation to further his political and business interests. Trump was ordered to pay \$2 million to an array of charities as a fine and the charity, the Trump Foundation, was shut down.

Trump incorporated the Trump Organization in New York in 1981. He still owns it, but he put his assets into a revocable trust and gave up his positions as the company's director, president and chairman when he became president, leaving management of the company to sons Eric and Donald Trump Jr.

Trump did not return to a stated leadership position upon leaving the White House in 2021, but his sons testified he's been involved in some decision making.

Engoron had already appointed a monitor, retired federal judge Barbara Jones, to keep an eye on the company. □

Associated Press

The Census Bureau is considering how to ask about gender identity. People have their opinions

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER**
Associated Press

The U.S. Census Bureau is thinking about how to ask about sex. People have opinions.

Dozens of health officials, civil rights groups, individuals and businesses have weighed in about how the statistical agency should ask about sexual orientation and gender identity for the first time on its most comprehensive survey of American life.

An Associated Press review of the 91 written public comments posted last month shows them to be largely supportive of the proposed additions, though not without constructive criticism.

The proposed questions geared toward people age 15 and older will be tested sometime this year. If given final approval, they would be the first to directly ask about these topics on the American Community Survey, which already asks about commuting times, internet access, family life, income, education levels, disabilities and military service, for example.

Many who submitted public comments said the proposed questions will provide a better understanding of the diversity of LGBTQ+ people in the



A fan holds a flag on Gay Pride night in the second half of an NCAA college basketball game, Feb. 9, 2024, in Boulder, Colo.

United States at a time when state legislatures are limiting what can be discussed about LGBTQ issues in public schools and are moving to restrict the ability of transgender people to change their driver's licenses and birth certificates.

"The currently too-limited data resources stand in stark contrast to the numerous policy debates and legislative efforts focused on these populations," said Gary Gates, a retired demographer who studied

LGBTQ+ issues at UCLA.

Gates, however, objected to wording that would allow someone to answer, "Straight, that is not gay" for the sexual orientation question.

"The phrase is patently offensive," Gates wrote. "Not being gay is hardly an accurate definition of a straight identity. ... Why emphasize that they specifically are not gay? It is simply not an adequate description of straight identity." The questions should reflect

the constantly changing language describing sexual orientation and gender identity particularly among young people, and some non-English speakers may not understand terms like "heterosexual," said David Ernesto Munar, president and CEO of Howard Brown Health, which provides health care services to the LGBTQ community in Chicago. Others lamented the lack of categories for people with intersex traits or who are asexual or pan-

sexual. Intersex is an umbrella term for a number of conditions where internal or external sex characteristics aren't exactly like typical male or female bodies. Asexual people don't experience sexual feelings, while pansexual people are attracted to people regardless of gender.

Rene Coig objected to respondents being asked their sex at birth and then being asked their current gender. Asking to respond to the first question as "male" or "female" is alienating to transgender people who may not want to be identified with those labels, said Coig, a doctoral candidate at the University of Washington. Others were disheartened by transgender being separated out as a category from male, female and nonbinary in the gender question instead of including the options of transgender man and transgender woman.

"It may imply that they are not 'male enough' or 'female enough' to select the male and female categories and are instead a third category of 'transgender' that is distinct from the male and female categories," said Amy Leite Bennett, an official with Hennepin County Health and Human Services in Minneapolis. □

Associated Press

New York appeals court hears arguments over the fate of the state's ethics panel



Former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo speaks during a New York Hispanic Clergy Organization meeting, Thursday, March 17, 2022, in New York.

Associated Press

By **MICHAEL HILL**
Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Months after a judge ruled that New York's ethics watchdog violated the state constitution because it was too independent, a state lawyer told an appeals court that officials had the right to create a corruption-fighting commission more insulated from the people it monitors.

The arguments Friday over the fate of the state Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government stem from a lawsuit filed by former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who claims the commission

lacked the constitutional authority to prosecute him. Cuomo, who resigned in 2021, is fighting an attempt by the commission to force him to forfeit \$5 million he got for writing a book about his administration's efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The commission was created in 2022 to investigate potential ethics and lobbying violations by state officials, employees, lobbyists and their clients. The Legislature and Gov. Kathy Hochul replaced a previous ethics body that had been widely criticized for not being independent enough.

Under the current commission, the governor appoints only three of the commission's 11 members, cannot force them to explain their actions and cannot remove them for neglecting their duties.

A lower court judge ruled in September that the commission's independence makes it a problem under the state constitution, since enforcement of ethics laws is a power that belongs to the executive branch.

The ethics commission has continued to operate while the state appealed to the Appellate Division of the state Supreme Court. □

Russia's prison service says that imprisoned opposition leader Alexei Navalny has died

By The Associated Press

Alexei Navalny, the fiercest foe of Russian President Vladimir Putin who crusaded against official corruption and staged massive anti-Kremlin protests, died in prison Friday, Russia's prison agency said. He was 47. The Federal Penitentiary Service said in a statement that Navalny felt unwell after a walk on Friday and lost consciousness. An ambulance arrived to try to rehabilitate him, but he died. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov says Putin was informed of Navalny's death and the prison service was looking into the death in line with standard procedures. Navalny's spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, that the politician's team had no confirmation of his death so far and that his lawyer was traveling to the town where he was held. Navalny, who was serving a 19-year sentence on charges of extremism, was moved in December from his former prison in the Vladimir region of central Russia to a "special regime" penal colony the highest security level of prisons in Russia above the Arctic Circle. His allies decried the transfer to a colony in the town of Kharp, in the Yamalo-Nenets region about 1,900 kilome-



Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny takes part in a march in memory of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov in Moscow, Russia on Feb. 29, 2020.

ters (1,200 miles) northeast of Moscow, as yet another attempt to force Navalny into silence. The remote region is notorious for long and severe winters. Kharp is about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Vorkuta, whose coal mines were part of the Soviet gulag prison-camp system. Navalny had been behind bars since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning that he blamed on the Kremlin. Before his arrest, he cam-

paigned against official corruption, organized major anti-Kremlin protests and ran for public office. He had since received three prison sentences, all of which he rejected as politically motivated. In Putin's Russia, political opponents often faded amid factional disputes or went into exile after imprisonment, suspected poisonings or other heavy repression. But Navalny grew consistently stronger and reached the apex of the opposition through grit,

bravado and an acute understanding of how social media could circumvent the Kremlin's suffocation of independent news outlets. He faced each setback whether it was a physical assault or imprisonment with an intense devotion, confronting dangers with a sardonic wit. That drove him to the bold and fateful move of returning from Germany to Russia and certain arrest. Navalny was born in Butyn, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) outside Moscow. He received a law degree

from People's Friendship University in 1998 and did a fellowship at Yale in 2010. He gained attention by focusing on corruption in Russia's murky mix of politicians and businesses; one of his early moves was to buy a stake in Russian oil and gas companies to become an activist shareholder and push for transparency. By concentrating on corruption, Navalny's work had a pocketbook appeal to Russians' widespread sense of being cheated, and he carried stronger resonance than more abstract and philosophical concerns about democratic ideals and human rights.

He was convicted in 2013 of embezzlement on what he called a politically motivated prosecution and was sentenced to five years in prison, but the prosecutor's office later surprisingly demanded his release pending appeal.

A higher court later gave him a suspended sentence. The day before the sentence, Navalny had registered as a candidate for Moscow mayor. The opposition saw his release as the result of large protests in the capital of his sentence, but many observers attributed it to a desire by authorities to add a tinge of legitimacy to the mayoral election. □

Associated Press

Harris repudiates Trump worldview and says the U.S. won't back down on Ukraine's defense

By MATTHEW LEE

AP Diplomatic Writer

MUNICH (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris on Friday warned of the dangers of growing authoritarianism and isolationism in a not-so-veiled repudiation of Donald Trump's worldview and threats to renege on security guarantees for NATO allies should he return to the White House.

Speaking at the Munich Security Conference, Harris offered a broad defense of the Biden administration's approach to global challenges, especially in lead-



United States Vice-President Kamala Harris prepares to address the audience during the Munich Security Conference at the Bayerischer Hof Hotel in Munich, Germany, Friday, Feb. 16, 2024.

Associated Press

ing international support for Ukraine in its war with Russia. Her comments came as the Ukraine risks losing U.S. support due to congressional dysfunction and positions taken by Trump and many of his supporters. Amid an atmosphere of deep angst at the conference that was punctuated by the news Friday of the death in prison of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, Harris said the United States would not back down on supporting democracy and multilateralism as well defending in-

ternational rules and norms from attempts to subvert them.

"Isolation is not insulation," she said. "In fact, when America has isolated herself, threats have only grown. In these unsettled times it is clear America cannot retreat.

America must stand strong for democracy. We must stand in defense of international rules and norms and we must stand with our allies."

"However, there are some in the United States who disagree," she said. □

Brazil's health agents scour junkyards and roofs for mosquitos to fight dengue epidemic

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The small team of state public health workers slalomed between auto parts strewn across a Rio de Janeiro junkyard, looking for standing water where mosquitos might have laid their eggs.

They were part of nationwide efforts to curtail a surge in Brazil of the mosquito-borne illness of dengue fever during the country's key tourist season that runs through the end of February.

Paulo Cesar Gomes, a 56-year-old entomologist, found some mosquito larvae swimming in shallow rainwater inside a car bumper.

"We call this type of location a strategic point" because of the high turnover in items converging from all over, he said. "It's difficult not to have mosquitoes here."

Earlier in the month, just days before Rio kicked off its world-famous Carnival festivities, the city joined several states and the country's capital in declaring a public health epidemic over this year's greater-than-normal number of cases of dengue.



Zuleida greets and speaks with municipal health workers and volunteers who are inspecting the Tabajaras favela for standing water where *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes can breed, in an effort to stop the spread of dengue in the Copacabana neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024.

"We had more cases in January than any other January," Ethel Maciel, head of health surveillance at Brazil's Health Ministry, said in an interview with The Associated Press.

So far this year, Brazil has recorded 512,000 cases nationwide, including both confirmed and likely cases nearly four times more than those registered in the same period a year ago.

There have been 425 deaths under investigation for dengue so far this year, with 75 confirmed, as compared with just over 1,000 for all of 2023.

Dengue is a viral infection transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Frequent rains and high temperatures, which accelerate the hatching of mosquito eggs and the development of

larvae, make the famously hot city of Rio especially susceptible to outbreaks. Many who are infected never develop symptoms, but dengue can cause high fever, headache, body aches, nausea and a rash, according to the World Health Organization. While most get better after a week or so, some develop a severe form that requires hospitalization and

can be fatal.

Health workers like Gomes, equipped with masks and plastic gloves, meticulously combed the junkyard on a hot morning, gently kicking and shaking piled up auto parts looking for any trace of the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that can spread dengue.

Whenever he saw standing water Gomes grabbed a hand pipette out of his bag and looked for larvae, which he collected in a white plastic container. Captured mosquitos and larvae are kept alive and brought to a city laboratory to be tested for dengue.

At locations with positive tests, health agents spray the walls with a product that kills mosquitos and then monitor the location for weeks.

Maciel, from the Health Ministry, said the first warning about a possible epidemic came in September. Brazil's leading research institute, the state-funded Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, or Fiocruz, came up with several scenarios indicating that Brazil could have as many as 4.2 million cases this year, up from 1.6 million in 2023. □

Associated Press

Hong Kong customs arrests 7 in a \$1.8 billion money laundering case linked to transnational crime

By **KANIS LEUNG**
Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) —

Hong Kong customs officials have arrested seven people linked to the terri-

tory's largest ever money laundering case, involving about 14 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$1.8 billion) some of it linked to a scam case in India.

The seven local residents, aged between 23 and 74, were part of a large-scale transnational syndicate that used various shell companies and bank accounts to transfer large sums from overseas to the city under the guise of running international trading businesses, customs officials said Friday. One account once received as much as 100 million Hong Kong dollars (\$12.8 million) on a single day, they said.

Ip Tung-ching, the head

of customs financial investigation bureau, said 2.9 billion Hong Kong dollars (\$371 million) of the total was suspected to be linked to a scam case involving a mobile application in India. But she did not say which application it was.

Some of those arrested were non-Chinese residents of Hong Kong, she said without giving details. Authorities believe the syndicate received remittances from India in name of exporting electronic devices, diamonds, gems and precious metals, Ip said. Proceeds were then transferred to bank accounts in Hong Kong for money laundering. "These acts of

money laundering provide protective umbrellas for the illegal profits of criminals," she said.

Law enforcement in Hong Kong, India and elsewhere cooperated in carrying out the operation, enabling its success, Ip said.

Yu Yiu-wing, the bureau's divisional commander, said officers exchanged intelligence with Indian authorities and found some of the money came from two jewelry companies that Indian authorities said were connected to the scam.

A 34-year-old Hong Kong resident arrested in late January is suspected to be the syndicate's mastermind, she said. □



Head of Customs Financial Investigation Bureau Ip Tung-ching, center, Deputy Head Yeung Yuk-man, left, and Divisional Commander Yu Yiu-wing attend a press conference on a money laundering case in Hong Kong, Friday, Feb. 16, 2024.

Associated Press

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It was 1938 when Mr. Eric Ponson started his journey at General Store. Ponson did not hesitate and decided to buy General Store. Buying a store and thus going from employee to owner of a business with a debt of 11.000 guilders was not an easy task.

As the saying goes: "Behind every successful man, is a strong woman". In the case of Ponson, this was no different. As General Store progressed and slowly became successful, Mrs. Irene Ponson, came in to assist her husband. Irene Ponson is a visionary, she knew exactly where and how to invest and within a short amount of time in 1970, General Store moved to a better location at the Steenweg. This allowed for a lot more merchandise, products and employees. Supply and demand was as such, that General Store became the number 1 electrical business. Business kept going so well that the location at the Steenweg became too small and was moved later to Dakota Shopping Paradise and later to Pedro Gallego Straat. With this move, an expansion was decided upon and an electronics store in Savaneta was opened. General Store still being very successful was ready for more growth.

Ricky, Kenneth, Corine and Frans are the fruits of this marriage. Kenneth and Frans however, decided to further develop their father's legacy and continued with their mother's dream to expand the business. An expansion not in square feet only, but in merchandise as well. A great opportunity presented itself when the Ponson family was able to buy a piece of property across from the airport. In 2007 the Ponson family moved into their brand new and huge building. Ponson's General Store now had an electrical department, a housewares department, a paint department and a hardware department.

After a successful opening and expansion, Kenneth and Frans who inherited their mother's vision, decided that General Store was ready for yet another expansion. With the support of Mr. Tom Barfell and management of Do it Best in the States, the construction of Do it Center commenced.

Fast forward to today. A Do it Center in Aruba, with more than 50.000 top of the line items for interior as well exterior use, building materials, STO products and a top of the line grocery store. Perseverance, responsibility, vision and the courage to invest have made Ponson's General



Store as successful as it is today.

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Groceries? Visit the fully stocked supermarket with fresh fruits and vegetables and high class meat selections. Highly known products and brands are here for you to grab. Every week Do It Center Groceries offers its weekly special on selected items. Weekly specials are very popular and a perfect chance for you to buy your favorite products at a reduced price.

Need a home makeover? Do not skip the furniture department "Leenbakker". Here, you will find a divine collection of European furniture, worldwide known for their modern and stylish features for your bedroom, bathroom, living room or kitchen. For your garden they have a wide selection of durable furniture specially made for our tropical climate. Take a walk around and find some treasures. Find the perfect accessory for your house, fitted for your personality and style. Modern, elegant, retro industrial, whatever your style is you will definitely find something for your personal taste.

Do it Center Shaba is open from Monday to Saturday from 8AM to 8PM and on Sunday's from 9AM to 6PM.

For more information go to www.doit.aw □



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**Aruban legends:
Frenchman's Pass**



(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman's Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman's pass (known to locals as "Franse Pas") remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to generation.

The history of the Frenchman's pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing to give up their land. However, as the French were

heavily equipped with fire arms, the indigenous settlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves. From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman's Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to hitchhike, the man saw a car approaching, appear-

ing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn't think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitch hiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the window and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began to tell everyone about

his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they realized he wasn't some drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: "Look, there's the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!"

French man's pass is one of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass contributes a lot to our culture of folkloric story-telling.

Source: visitaruba.com

Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at the Aruba Beach Club!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Emerald Ambassadors of Aruba. These ambassadors were honored with a certificate acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)**
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)**
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)**

Honorees were:

Emerald Ambassador (35> years consecutively visiting Aruba)
 Mr. Leon & Mrs. Susan Mismas from Connecticut, United States.

Ms. Marouska Heyliger represent-

ing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of the Aruba Beach Club bestowed the honor certificate to the honorees, presented them with gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination as their home away-from-home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the honorees were:

- The Mismas':**
- Aruba's year-round sunny weather
 - Aruba's nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets

- Aruba's warm & friendly people
- Aruba's delicious variety of foods
- Aruba's safety



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Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!

(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.

On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and

Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They

were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years, and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times in the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and



rare remnant of geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are

able to take concrete action in protecting and preserving our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen!

Aruba Tourism Authority honors loyal visitors at Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort!

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently had the great pleasure of recognizing Distinguished Visitors and Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. These visitors were respectively honored with certificates acknowledging their years of visits, loyalty, and love for the island of Aruba.

The honor certification is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation and to say "Masha Danki" to guests who have visited Aruba 10, 20, or 35 years or more consecutively.

The three honoring levels are as follows:

- Distinguished Visitor (10>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Goodwill Ambassador (20>years consecutively visiting Aruba)
- Emerald Ambassador (35>years consecutively visiting Aruba)

The honorees were:

Distinguished Visitors

Mr. Dennis & Mrs. Kim Weihs from New York, United States.

Goodwill Ambassadors

Mr. David & Mrs. Bernice Squires from Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada.

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and staff members of the Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort bestowed the certificates to the honorees, presented them



with gifts, and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination, as their home away from home.

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the Weihs were:

- Aruba's beauty.
- Aruba's cleanliness.
- Aruba's fantastic weather.
- "The Bucuti & Tara Beach Resort!"
- "Friends we have made throughout the years."

Top reasons for returning to Aruba, provided by the Squires were:

- Aruba's great people.
- Aruba's warm sunny weather.
- Aruba's restaurants.
- Aruba's safety.
- Aruba's turquoise beaches.

On behalf of the Aruba Tourism Authority, we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the honorees for their continued visits to the "One Happy Island".

Visit the island's popular cave sites!



(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadiriki cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an “off-road” tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves...and be sure to bring a flashlight!

Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadirikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to

lock her up in the Quadirikiri Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadirikiri cave, the two love birds found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadirikiri Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Ar-

awak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual



ceremonies.

The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently

closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is interesting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Awarak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy, and don't forget to bring a flashlight!

Did you know about...

Basic driving rules on Aruba (part 1)

(Oranjestad)—Have you ever felt confused when you're driving on the highways or backstreets of Aruba? Then we present a simple guide to some of the basic rules of Aruban traffic, along with some tips for things to look out for.

Speed limit

Legally, the speed limit on the four-lane highways is 80 km/h. This speed limit also counts for the main roads that are connected to the highways. The minimum speed is 50 km/h. Most people drive around 60 km/h on the main roads and about 70 km/h on the highways. There are also areas that indicate a speed limit on a sign; these are usually around populated and school areas.

The four-lane highways contain the left-lane, also known as the "fast" lane for each direction. Here is where vehicles can drive up to the maximum speed. However, legally it is not permitted to drive for long periods of time on the left lane. This lane is primarily designed for drivers to switch lanes before a roundabout, for example, if your exit on the roundabout is on your far left. The general lane to drive in—both at maximum and minimum speed—is on the right lane.

Roundabouts

Speaking of roundabouts, it is important to know where you have to enter and drive on the roundabout to make your exit. A good rule of thumb is to count the exits starting from your right side. So, exit 1 would be on your right; exit 2 would be straight ahead; exit 3 would be on your far left and exit 4 would lead to the road paralleled to the one you're on, heading in the other direction.

Most roundabouts have these 4 exits, so they are relatively simple. When you're driving on the four-lane highway, it is important to know when to switch to the left lane to make your



exit: if your exit is on your far left (exit 3), then you need to switch to the left lane on the highway before nearing the roundabout so you can take the path that leads you directly to your exit. If your exit is on your right or if you're going straight ahead, you can keep driving in the right lane of the highway.

It's also important to know that vehicles about to enter the roundabout must yield to those already on it. A good rule of thumb is to look out if someone is coming from your left side.

However, other roundabouts can be quite tricky to navigate...

Watty Vos Boulevard (the "paperclip" roundabout)

Probably the biggest roundabout on the island, the "paperclip" roundabout on the Watty Vos Boulevard is one of the trickier roundabouts that could—and has—caused confused among both tourists and locals. However, once

you take a good look at it, it's fairly simple. The basis is just the same as a regular roundabout (left exit? left lane! etc.), but instead of having four different exits like on a regular roundabout, now you have two extra; one on the right and the other on the left side of the roundabout. The rules don't change at all, you just have to keep an extra eye open.

Airport roundabout

Ah, yes. The infamous airport roundabout. The favorite roundabout amongst local, because of its easy (hard) lanes that never (always) cause confusion among drivers. Sarcasm aside, this roundabout can be tricky to enter, especially when you're driving from the direction of the airport heading. When you're driving away from the airport reaching the roundabout, you'll be faced with three lanes. The far right lane is to take the exit 1 out heading east (right lane of highway). The middle exit is used for exit 1 (left lane of highway), 2 and 3. The far left exit is used to only exit on exit 3 (left lane of highway) and 4.

"Las Americas" roundabout

The Las Americas roundabout is located near the Talk of the Town hotel, west from the airport roundabout. This roundabout may look like a regular roundabout—and for the most part, it is. However, when you are driving from the east going in the direction of town, please take note that there are two exits on your right.

When you're driving towards this roundabout, you'll notice that the road becomes wider, splitting into two lanes. The right lane is used to take the first and second exit on the right. If you want to exit straight ahead, you must drive on the left lane!

It's always scary to drive in new places where the traffic may look and work differently, but once you get it right once, you'll get the hang of it in no time. Additionally, all roundabouts and roads on Aruba have signs and arrows painted on the road to help guide you. So take your time, keep your eyes open and don't forget to wear a seat belt!



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 41 Puzo subject
 - 1 Flight cost
 - 5 Best Picture winner in 2013
 - 9 Trivial
 - 10 Sentence subjects
 - 12 Painter Degas
 - 13 Racket
 - 14 Contemporary
 - 16 Box office sales, in Variety
 - 17 — Aviv
 - 18 Filing concern
 - 20 Clog
 - 22 Bauxite and galena
 - 23 Wrong
 - 25 Play start
 - 28 "Taken" star
 - 32 Not in time
 - 34 Stage signal
 - 35 Angled pipe
 - 36 Reason to get dressed up
 - 38 Similar
 - 40 — up (hid out)
- DOWN**
- 1 Act
 - 2 "Measure for Measure" role
 - 3 Wander
 - 4 Book typo
 - 5 Wing
 - 6 Aussie hopper
 - 7 Rock instrument
 - 8 Like some training
 - 9 Ham and lamb
 - 11 Perennial battlers
 - 15 Draw on
 - 19 Token of love
 - 21 Sandbox toy
 - 24 Is furious
 - 25 Top players
 - 26 Shirt part
 - 27 Popular toast
 - 29 Justice Antonin
 - 30 Beat in a hot dog contest
 - 31 Calls for
 - 33 In the lead
 - 37 Distribute
 - 39 Relatives

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A XYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

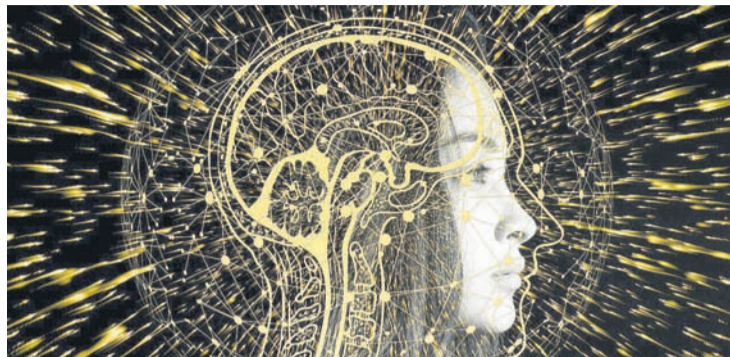
2-17

CRYPTOQUOTE

LME XIIGA BEPI LMIX ZER'PI
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ANYXW, SRN EXBZ EXI
NUANIA QEEG. — "NMI
JUDPIBERA JDA. JUYAIB"

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: TO US, FAMILY MEANS PUTTING YOUR ARMS AROUND EACH OTHER AND BEING THERE. — BARBARA BUSH

**Simon Waslander:
Navigating the AI revolution**



The topic which we will be covering the following months is so broad, potent and controversial, that it is difficult to summarize in even an entire series of articles. We are talking about the Revolution in Artificial Intelligence, a technological trend that will change every facet of society.

It also gives rise philosophical questions of the most profound level. In this first article we try to introduce this topic in a balanced and broad way, so that we can navigate these years, and actually decades, in a fair and advantageous way for the whole of society.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

In its most basic form, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is any form of "intelligence" that functions on non-biological substrates. Then again, what science considers as intelligence is a very complicated topic, to which we will dedicate an entire future article.

AI is not a new topic, back in the 1950s, big thinkers like Alan Turing and John von Neuman indicated that I theory, it should be possible for a computer to be 'intelligent'. In the 1980s, the first 'appetizers', which was the algorithm Neural Net was made by among others, Marvin Minsky.

In 2024, we arrive at the time of Large Neural Nets, which are the basis for all the programs like the famous ChatGPT. ChatGPT, impressive as it may be, is only a small chapter of what is possible in the coming future.

Why is this revolution so special?

The modern human's journey is a remarkable one. Through our intelligence and cooperation we have created an extremely high quality of life compared to only 200 years ago. Think of modern medicine, basic standard of living like a house, food, communication through internet, smartphone, television and much more.

Books like Peter Diamandis' "Abundance" and Ramez Naam's "The Infinite Resource" go over these topics in detail.

Truly there is still a lot of bad and a lot that can be better, like world wars, international and local poverty, and human and animal suffering. But if we look at the Big Picture, humanity has progressed enormously. And this is due to the fact of 'intelligence', in this case, human.

The promise of AI is that it can accelerate this progress in a way that simply is

not visible for people. Examples include the cure for cancer, solar panels for the price of paper, agriculture with high levels of quality, a solution for global warming, and more.

The human throne

The aspect that makes this topic scary and profoundly philosophical is that for the first time in history, the cardinal status of humanity at the top of the pyramid is being called into question. In the long run, a human being won't be able to compete with AI.

On a more academic level, already in 2005, engineer Raymond Kurzweil in his book "The Singularity is Near" touched on this aspect of AI.

Dystopian movies like "Terminator" and "The Matrix" illustrate the dangers of a super-AI that can wipe-out humanity. But all these scenarios are in the context of scarcity, and with a very badly-made AI, and without any safeguards. At the Oxford Institute, academics are thinking on how to deal with these kinds of aspects.

A less philosophical and more relevant question is how human beings are going to deal with the fact that there is no longer a way to work, in any capacity. In our ultra-Western country, where the value of a human being is equated with his work, and the status this work provides in society.

Now, if every form of work is automated, including physical work but also more intellectual jobs like doctor, lawyer or even professor, then the human being needs to find a new purpose.

Potential for Utopia or Dystopia

Now with something so cardinal and fundamental as our position of "World King" coming into play, we can easily conclude that AI is a topic over which society needs to deeply reflect. □

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Sora is ChatGPT maker OpenAI's new text-to-video generator. Here's what we know about the new tool



The OpenAI logo is displayed on a cell phone with an image on a computer monitor generated by ChatGPT's Dall-E text-to-image model, Friday, Dec. 8, 2023, in Boston.

Associated Press

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and MATT O'BRIEN
AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — The maker of ChatGPT is now diving into AI-generated video.

Meet Sora OpenAI's new text-to-video generator. The tool, which the San Francisco company unveiled Thursday, uses generative artificial intelligence to instantly create short videos based on written commands.

Sora isn't the first to demonstrate this kind of technology. But industry analysts point to the high quality of the tool's videos displayed so far, and note that its introduction marks a significant leap for both OpenAI

and the future of text-to-video generation overall. Still, as with all things in the rapidly growing AI space today, such technology also raises fears about potential ethical and societal implications. Here's what you need to know.

WHAT IS SORA? CAN I USE IT YET?

Sora is a text-to-video generator creating videos up to 60 seconds long based on written prompts using generative AI. The model can also generate video from an existing still image. Generative AI is a branch of AI that can create something new. Examples include chatbots, like OpenAI's ChatGPT, and image-generators such as DALL-E

and Midjourney. Getting an AI system to generate videos is newer and more challenging but relies on some of the same technology.

Sora isn't available for public use yet (OpenAI says it's engaging with policymakers and artists before officially releasing the tool) and there's a lot we still don't know. But since Thursday's announcement, the company has shared a handful of examples of Sora-generated videos to show off what it can do.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman also took to X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, to ask social media users to send in prompt ideas. He later shared realistically detailed videos that responded to prompts like "two golden retrievers podcasting on top of a mountain" and "a bicycle race on ocean with differ-

ent animals as athletes riding the bicycles with drone camera view."

While Sora-generated videos can depict complex, incredibly detailed scenes, OpenAI notes that there are still some weaknesses including some spatial and cause-and-effect elements. □



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WK 7 and 14 - all views

GOLD SEASON

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3 Bed Ocean View \$20,000

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Western Conference wheeling and dealing is well underway long before the NHL trade deadline

By **STEPHEN WHYNO**
AP Hockey Writer

Rick Tocchet and Rick Bowness were together at NHL All-Star Weekend when news broke that the Winnipeg Jets traded for Sean Monahan.

Bowness' team made a big addition less than 48 hours after Tocchet's Vancouver Canucks acquired Elias Lindholm, considered the top center on the market.

"It's a great trade for them," Tocchet said. "It's a great move by Winnipeg, great move by Vancouver getting our guy."

Toss in the Colorado Avalanche signing veteran winger Zach Parise around the same time, and the wheeling and dealing is well underway in the Western Conference. And there's still three weeks left until the March 8 deadline, as trade talk picks up and plenty more movement is expected.

One thing is for sure: getting through the gauntlet that is the West has already gotten more difficult for the top contenders eyeing a run at the Stanley Cup.

"The West is really tight," said Nathan MacKinnon,



Vancouver Canucks' Elias Lindholm passes the puck during the third period of the team's NHL hockey game against the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024, in Vancouver, British Columbia.

a front-runner for the Hart Trophy as league MVP two years removed from leading the Avalanche to a championship. "It's wide open. Hockey's such an even sport right now with the parity. Teams are definitely making some moves.

I don't know what we're going to do, but I like our team."

There's plenty to like about a lot of teams in the West, starting with the league-leading Canucks, who have not lost more than two games in a row all sea-

son. The Dallas Stars, atop in the Central Division, are legitimate threats along with Colorado, Vancouver, Connor McDavid's Edmonton Oilers and of course the defending Stanley Cup champion Vegas Golden Knights.

Associated Press

"There's a lot of good teams battling," Lindholm said. "Obviously, (we have) a lot of good players and a lot skill strength throughout the whole lineup. Winnipeg has a great team, too. It will be fun. Hopefully our team can go on and have a long season."

Getting Monahan certainly boosts the chances of that for the Jets, who have won back-to-back games to steady the ship after a five-game skid sandwiched around the All-Star break. In the second season under Bowness, Winnipeg has depth, elite goaltending in Connor Hellebuyck and plays the hard-nosed style that's needed in the playoffs.

"You see the game progress from preseason to regular season, and I think there's another step from the trade deadline on and then obviously the playoffs," said All-Star Kyle Connor, who leads the Jets with 19 goals. "It's a completely different game.

The best that we can (do) to try to translate our game, play playoff hockey now, is only going to better prepare ourselves for that." □

MLB cracking down on obstruction in an effort to encourage more aggressive baserunning

By **JAY COHEN**
AP Baseball Writer

SURPRISE, Ariz. (AP) — Ronald Acuña Jr. and Corbin Carroll just got a little more

dangerous. Same for Bobby Witt Jr., Elly De La Cruz and the rest of baseball's fastest players.

Major League Baseball



Detroit Tigers catcher Carson Kelly catches a pitch in the bullpen during a baseball spring training workout Friday, Feb. 16, 2024, in Lakeland, Fla.

Associated Press

wants umpires to crack down on obstruction, and the commissioner's office went over its plans during a call with big league managers this week. The increased emphasis is only on the bases and not at home plate.

The focus is on infielders who drop a knee or leg down in front of a bag while receiving a throw, acting as a deterrence for aggressive baserunning and creating an increased risk of injuries.

"I think with everything, they're trying to make the game a little safer to avoid some unnecessary injuries," Phillies shortstop Trea Turner said Friday at the team's facility in Florida. "The intentions are always good. It

comes down to how it affects the players and the games. I'm sure there will be plays where one team doesn't like it or one team does." With more position players arriving at spring training every day, the topic likely will come up more and more as teams ramp up for the season.

"We'll touch on that. We'll show them some video of what's good and what's not," Texas Rangers manager Bruce Bochy said. "You know, it's going to be a little adjustment."

Making obstruction a point of emphasis fits in with an ongoing effort by MLB to create more action. Obstruction calls are not reviewable, which could lead to some disgruntled players

and managers as enforcement is stepped up, but it also means it won't create long replay deliberations.

A package of rule changes last season including pitch clocks, bigger bases and limits on defensive shifts and pickoff attempts had a dramatic effect. There were 3,503 stolen bases in the regular season, up from 2,486 in 2022 and the most since 1987.

MLB changed a different baserunning rule this off-season, widening the runner's lane approaching first base to include a portion of fair territory. MLB also shortened the pitch clock with runners on base by two seconds to 18 and further reducing mound visits in an effort to speed games. □

Iowa's Caitlin Clark wants more focus on team during final stretch now that NCAA record is broken

By ERIC OLSON
AP Sports Writer

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — More scoring records are in sight for Caitlin Clark, but right now the Iowa superstar is looking forward to a break from the chase. She passed Kelsey Plum as the NCAA women's career scoring leader Thursday night, putting up a school-record 49 points in a 106-89 victory over Michigan and running her career total to 3,569.

Iowa coach Lisa Bluder said it was a relief to have Clark's pursuit of the NCAA record end.

"It's been a little bit of a distraction, but a good distraction, right?" Bluder said. "You want these kinds of distractions for your team. But at the same time, it's time now for us to really focus on making our team better and getting ready for Indiana next week, the Big Ten Tournament and the NCAA Tournament." With Clark having become the face of college basketball, the spotlight has been on the fourth-ranked Hawkeyes for a year.

They reached the national championship game for the first time, losing to LSU in



Iowa guard Caitlin Clark (22) stands with teammate after being presented with a commemorative basketball after the team's NCAA college basketball game against Michigan, Thursday, Feb. 15, 2024, in Iowa City, Iowa.

a game that set a television viewership record of nearly 10 million and is remembered for the "you can't see me" gesture Angel Reese made toward Clark. The Hawkeyes drew national attention again in October when they played DePaul in an exhibition at Kinnick Stadium that drew 55,646, the largest crowd

to ever watch a women's basketball game. And from the start of the regular season, Clark's progress toward the NCAA scoring record turned into the narrative. "Obviously, getting this record is tremendous and it has to be celebrated," she said. "There are so many people who have come

before me and laid such a great foundation for women's basketball, and that has to be celebrated, too. "We're really getting into the best part of basketball season. These are the times when your team really shows who you are, and I believe coach Bluder always has us playing our best basketball

at the end of February and in March."

When the Hawkeyes play at Indiana next Thursday, Clark will be 80 points away from Lynette Woodard's major college basketball women's record of 3,649 for Kansas from 1977-81. The NCAA doesn't recognize that record because it was set when the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women governed women's college sports. Assuming Clark breaks Woodard's record, she will be within striking distance of the overall NCAA mark held by LSU's Pete Maravich, who finished his career with 3,667 points. He amassed his points in only three seasons (1967-70) because freshmen of his era weren't allowed to play on varsity teams.

Woodard and Maravich set their records when there was no 3-point shot in college basketball. Francis Marion's Pearl Moore has the overall record with 4,061 points from 1975-79 at the small-college level in the AIAW. Moore had 177 of her points at Anderson Junior College before enrolling at Francis Marion. □

Associated Press

NFL suspends Raiders backup QB Jimmy Garoppolo for violating PEDs policy

By MARK ANDERSON
AP Sports Writer

HENDERSON, Nev. (AP) — Las Vegas Raiders backup quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo was suspended by the NFL on Friday for the first two games of next season for violating the performance-enhancing drugs policy of the league and NFL Players Association.

ESPN also reported the Raiders are expected to release Garoppolo next month before an \$11.25 million roster bonus kicks in. Garoppolo's days in Las Vegas appeared over at mid-season when then-interim coach Antonio Pierce replaced him with rookie Aidan O'Connell for the rest of the season. Pierce became

the Raiders' full-time coach last month, and the Raiders also hired Tom Telesco as their general manager. The Raiders signed Garop-

olo last offseason to a three-year, \$72.75 million contract when coach Josh McDaniels and GM Dave Ziegler were in charge. He



Las Vegas Raiders quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo (10) is shown before an NFL football game against the Denver Broncos, Sunday, Jan. 7, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

previously quarterbacked the San Francisco 49ers, making an appearance in the Super Bowl and two in the NFC championship. But Garoppolo threw seven touchdown passes and nine interceptions this season with a 77.6 quarterback rating, opening the way for O'Connell to take over. Garoppolo said after the season he wanted to be able to play again somewhere. "I'm pretty open," Garoppolo said at the time. "A lot of things are out of my control. I've had situations like that before, so as a player, you've got to roll with the punches a little bit. Whatever happens, I think it all happens for a reason.

You've got to make the best of your situation." The Raiders still have major decisions to make at quarterback. O'Connell could keep the job after going 5-4 under Pierce, or Las Vegas could look to upgrade through free agency, a trade or this year's draft. "There hasn't been a lot of years I've been the unquestioned starter going in, so I'm used to competing," O'Connell said on Jan. 25. "I had to compete to get to this spot that I'm in. I also think it would be right to have competition in this league. It's the NFL. It's the best of the best, so it's my job to try to keep my job." □

Weekly SPECIALS



<p>WAS \$9.99</p> <p>\$7.42</p> <p>Per KG</p>  <p>Chicken Spanish Stoba</p>	<p>WAS \$7.37</p> <p>\$5.71</p> <p>Per KG</p>  <p>Chicken Tenders Brasil</p>	<p>WAS \$9.42</p> <p>\$5.42</p> <p>Per KG</p>  <p>Ground Chicken</p>	<p>WAS \$10.57</p> <p>\$9.71</p> <p>Per KG</p>  <p>Coleslaw</p>
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<p>WAS \$6.85</p> <p>\$5.14</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Frikandellen 20st</p>	<p>WAS \$1.82</p> <p>\$1.65</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Clamato Tomato Cocktail 11.5oz</p>	<p>WAS \$6.05</p> <p>\$5.14</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Bertolli Alfredo Sauce 15oz</p>	<p>WAS \$2.85</p> <p>\$2.57</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Applesientje Zontomaat 1LT</p>	<p>WAS \$1.99</p> <p>\$1.82</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Exito Marca Propria Granola Coco 250gr</p>
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DAIRY/FROZEN

<p>WAS \$3.88</p> <p>\$2.97</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Breakstones Sour Cream 16oz</p>	<p>WAS \$5.99</p> <p>\$4.51</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Gwoon Rundvlees Krokot 8st</p>
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HBC/GM

<p>WAS \$18.28</p> <p>\$15.99</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Listerine Antiseptic Cool mint 1.5L</p>	<p>WAS \$2.74</p> <p>\$2.45</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Gwoon Bio container zakken 240L 3st</p>
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<p>WAS \$1.42</p> <p>\$1.14</p> <p>100 GR</p>  <p>American Yellow Cheese</p>	<p>WAS \$1.54</p> <p>\$1.25</p> <p>100 GR</p>  <p>Black Forest Ham</p>
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DRY FOOD

<p>WAS \$5.31</p> <p>\$4.57</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Goodburry Cornflakes Cereal 1KG</p>	<p>WAS \$1.82</p> <p>\$1.71</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Melkan Halfvolle Melk Houdbare 1LT</p>	<p>WAS \$6.68</p> <p>\$5.71</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Quaker Oats Old Fashioned 18oz</p>	<p>WAS \$2.62</p> <p>\$2.28</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Van Gilse Kristalsuiker 1KG</p>	<p>WAS \$3.42</p> <p>\$3.77</p> <p>Each</p>  <p>Gwoon Blauw Oploskoffie Cafeinevrij 100gr</p>
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